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Individual Differences in Habitual Social Goals and Daily Well-Being: The Role of Age and Relationship Closeness

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Abstract

There is robust evidence that social approach goals (i.e., approach of positive social outcomes) have positive and social avoidance goals (i.e., avoidance of negative social outcomes) negative consequences for subjective well-being in young adulthood. Little is known about individual differences in social goals in later life. The current diary study with young (n = 212), middle-aged (n = 232), and older adults (n = 229) tested—and supported—the hypotheses that age (a) differentially predicts the strength of habitual approach and avoidance goals in close and peripheral relationships and (b) moderates the relation of approach and avoidance goals in peripheral (but not close) relationships and daily outcomes (subjective well-being, subjective health, and satisfaction with social encounters). Older compared to younger adults reported higher levels of avoidance goals in peripheral (but not close) relationships. Younger adults who reported high levels of approach goals and older adults who reported high levels of avoidance goals in peripheral relationships experienced the most positive daily outcomes. In addition, social goals moderated some of the associations between (positive and negative) daily interactions and daily outcomes. Results underscore the importance of the closeness of social partners for individual differences in social goals across adulthood.

Keywords: habitual social goals; approach goals; avoidance goals; daily well-being; relationship closeness; age differences

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The wish to establish and maintain positive social relationships seems universal across the lifespan and cultures (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Geen, 1991). However, there are substantial individual differences in the orientation of social goals towards approaching positive outcomes or avoiding negative outcomes (Boyatzis, 1973; Mehrabian & Ksionzky, 1974). *Social approach goals* are mainly associated with positive (individual and interpersonal) outcomes due to the exposure to positive social events (Gable, 2006; Nikitin, Burgermeister, & Freund, 2012), preferential processing of positive social information (Strachman & Gable, 2006), and self-serving attributions of positive social experiences (Schoch, Nikitin, & Freund, 2015). In contrast, *social avoidance goals* are mainly associated with negative outcomes due to a higher reactivity to negative social events (Gable, 2006; Nikitin et al., 2012), preferential processing of negative social information (Nikitin & Freund, 2015b; Strachman & Gable, 2006), self-defeating attributions of negative social experiences (Schoch et al., 2015), and behavioral inhibition (Nikitin & Freund, 2010; for summaries see Gable & Berkman, 2008; Nikitin & Schoch, 2014).

As of yet, research on social approach and avoidance goals has mainly focused on young adulthood, a phase in life that differs from later life phases regarding its specific developmental tasks and social contexts (Erikson, 1982; Freund, Nikitin, & Ritter, 2009; Havighurst, 1972). Consequently, it is unclear whether findings from samples of young adults can be generalized to older age groups. In the present research, we argue that this is not the case. Applying a developmental perspective, we hypothesize that levels of social approach and avoidance goals differ between young, middle-aged, and older adults because people in these life phases encounter different developmental tasks and challenges that shape their goals. In the same line of argumentation, we hypothesize that social approach and avoidance goals are age-differentially associated with daily outcomes (subjective well-being, subjective

health, and satisfaction with social encounters). Applying a contextual approach to goal development, we further hypothesize that age-related differences in levels of social approach and avoidance goals and age-differential associations between social approach and avoidance goals and daily outcomes are moderated by relationship closeness.

Social Development Across Adulthood

As people move through adulthood and encounter different developmental tasks, their social preferences change (Carstensen et al., 1999; Erikson, 1982; Freund et al., 2009; Havighurst, 1972): Young adults are primarily motivated to establish a social network independent of their family of origin, and they seek social contacts that could be useful in their future lives. As people grow older, their motivation shifts to a stronger focus on familiar, long-term social partners whom they trust and with whom they share parts of their biographies. Accordingly, the size of people's social network increases up until young adulthood and then decreases steadily (Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013). This reduction is particularly driven by a focus on close social partners: Starting in midlife, people retain relationships with very close social ties but winnow casual acquaintances and other peripheral social ties (English & Carstensen, 2014).

People not only reduce the size of their social networks as they age, they also increasingly avoid negative social encounters (Birditt, Fingerman, & Almeida, 2005). It has been theorized that, compared to younger adults, older adults are more strongly affected by negative social interactions as negative social interactions lead to sustained levels of distress in older adults. Therefore, older adults are more motivated to avoid negative social interactions (Charles, 2010; Rook & Charles, 2017). A recent large study found that although negative social interactions decrease with age, the association between negative social interactions and physical health increases across adulthood (Hakulinen et al., 2016). Accordingly, older adults are more motivated to maintain social harmony and to avoid or reduce negative social encounters than younger adults (Birditt et al., 2005), report higher

levels of well-being when they successfully avoided negative social encounters (Charles, Piazza, Luong, & Almeida, 2009), and report lower levels of well-being when they were not able to avoid a negative social encounter (Nikitin, Schoch, & Freund, 2014). Do these developmental changes affect peoples' social approach and avoidance goals? We will address this question in the next section.

Social Approach and Avoidance Goals Across Adulthood

Goals "specify what a person is typically trying to do" (Emmons, 1996, p. 313). As such, goals "provide important insights into individual differences in personality, …, because they indicate construals of everyday concerns, challenges and opportunities, many of which involve relations with others" (Dunlop, 2015, p. 312; see also Emmons, 1999; Freund & Riediger, 2006; McAdams, 2013). Thus, goals do not only reflect a person's basic personality traits but also the specific life phase in which he or she finds oneself (Freund & Riediger, 2006). Specifically, people set and pursue goals according to their current social roles and developmental tasks (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006; McAdams & Olson, 2010; Roberts & Wood, 2006).

Applying this perspective, it can be argued that the shifts in developmental tasks and challenges described previously might affect social approach and avoidance goals (Nikitin & Freund, 2018; Nikitin et al., 2014). Young adults focus primarily on finding a partner, establishing a family, and developing friendships and work-related networks (Carstensen, Pasupathi, Mayr, & Nesselroade, 2000; Nurmi, 1992). They are oriented toward accumulation of resources including social resources (Carstensen et al., 1999; Ebner, Freund, & Baltes, 2006; Mustafić & Freund, 2012). As positive social relationships do not just happen but have to be actively approached (Gable, 2006), young adults need to set and pursue social approach goals in order to master their developmental tasks. In support of this hypothesis, young (but not middle-aged and older) adults who reported high levels of social approach goals in their

daily social encounters also reported high levels of social integration and low levels of loneliness (Nikitin & Freund, 2018).

In middle adulthood, a focus on the maintenance of achieved social roles outweighs the motivation to expand (Freund & Ebner, 2005; Hutteman, Hennecke, Orth, Reitz, & Specht, 2014). With increasing age, adults are less interested in establishing new social relationships and more motivated to maintain the most relevant and rewarding ones, likely with very close social partners (English & Carstensen, 2014). In addition, as discussed above, negative social encounters elicit higher levels of sustained emotional arousal in older compared to younger adults (Charles, 2010). Accordingly, older adults prefer behaviors that prevent negative social situations (Birditt & Fingerman, 2005; Blanchard-Fields, 2007) and they profit more from the avoidance of negative social situations than younger age groups (Charles et al., 2009). Thus, it seems plausible to assume that older adults pursue social avoidance goals more frequently than younger adults and that social avoidance goals increase in adaptiveness as people age (Blanchard-Fields, 2007; Charles & Carstensen, 2007).

This argumentation is based on the premise that social approach and avoidance goals are two independent motivational systems that work through different mechanisms (Elliot, Gable, & Mapes, 2006; Mehrabian, 1994; Nikitin & Freund, 2008). Although approach and avoidance goals are often positively correlated (Elliot et al., 2006; Impett et al., 2010; Nikitin & Freund, 2018), they predict different outcomes (e.g., Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005; Schoch et al., 2015; Updegraff, Gable, & Taylor, 2004) through different mechanisms (e.g., Gable & Poore, 2008; Nikitin & Freund, 2011, 2015a; Schoch et al., 2015).

The Role of Relationship Closeness

The contextualized approach to personality psychology (e.g., Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993; Heller, Watson, Komar, Min, & Perunovic, 2007; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Roberts, 2007) takes into account that personality characteristics differ across social roles and contexts. In a recent development of this personality approach, Dunlop (2015)

argued that similar to personality traits, goals—as the motivational part of personality (McAdams, 1995)—are both stable and context-specific. Speaking to the context-specificity, Dunlop and colleagues (Dunlop, Walker, & Wiens, 2014) found that, although people generally reported more agency than communion goals, they held more agency than communion goals in professional contexts and vice versa in relational contexts.

Applying the contextualized approach to personality to the present research questions, we argue that relationship closeness is an important contextual moderator of age differences in levels of social approach and avoidance goals and their associations with daily outcomes. As outlined above, there is a shift from focus on new/peripheral to an increasing focus on close social relationships with age (Carstensen et al., 1999). As young adults are particularly motivated to establish a social network, social approach goals in new, and at least at the beginning of the acquaintance also peripheral, relationships might be particularly beneficial in young adulthood. This assumption is based on the observation that social approach goals are positively correlated with actively approaching others (Gable, 2006; Nikitin et al., 2012), extraverted behavior (Nikitin & Freund, 2015a), and taking an active part in social interactions (Nikitin & Freund, 2010), which are necessary precursors of establishing positive social relationships (Gable, 2006). In contrast, social avoidance goals should be less beneficial for establishing new social relationships, among other things because they are associated with inhibited behavior and keeping a "low profile" when interacting with others, particularly with unfamiliar others (Nikitin & Freund, 2010, 2015a; Vorauer, Cameron, Holmes, & Pearce, 2003). Thus, social avoidance goals may prevent young adults from socializing with unfamiliar others and thereby jeopardize important developmental tasks in this age group.

As people age, social approach goals concerning unfamiliar, peripheral social relationships may become less important and less adaptive. One of the reasons might be that approaching positive social outcomes in unfamiliar social relationships may bind resources

such as time and energy that otherwise could be invested in close, emotionally meaningful social relationships that might better serve older adults' emotional needs. As outlined above, there is a shift to an increasing focus on close social relationships with age (Carstensen et al., 1999). The increasing preference for close social partners is likely linked to the developmental tasks of reviewing one's life (Erikson, 1982), a process that is helped along better by social partners who share stretches of one's life path than by new social contacts. Moreover, when facing health-related threats, older adults likely feel more comfortable around familiar social partners than people they do not know well. Taken together, then, familiar and long-standing close social partners are more likely to support the developmental tasks and challenges of old age than peripheral or new social partners.

In addition, older adults prioritize emotion-regulation goals (Carstensen et al., 1999), partly because—as discussed above—negative emotions that are elicited through negative social interactions detract from older people's well-being and health (Rook & Charles, 2017). This development might render social avoidance goals in peripheral social relationships more beneficial as people age. As Carstensen et al. (1999, p. 167) put it, "when emotion regulation is the primary goal, people are highly selective in their choice of social partners, nearly always preferring social partners who are familiar to them, because with these partners emotions are predictable and often quite positive." Because one knows peripheral social partners less well, they are less predictable. The relative unpredictability of peripheral social encounters might render the motivation to avoid potential negative outcomes in peripheral social relationships more adaptive as people age.

Regarding close relationships, we propose that the adaptivity of social approach and avoidance goals is similar across adulthood. As close relationships are one of the most important sources of psychological and physical well-being across the life span (Clark & Reis, 1988; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Myers, 1999; Umberson, Crosnoe, & Reczek, 2010), social approach goals in close relationships should be beneficial and social avoidance

goals detrimental irrespective of people's age (for similar argumentation, see Gable & Impett, 2012). Accordingly, people not only report higher levels of habitual approach than avoidance goals in their intimate relationships (Frank & Brandstätter, 2002), but high levels of approach goals in intimate relationships are also associated with high levels of well-being, whereas high levels of avoidance goals in intimated relationships are associated with low levels of well-being (Impett et al., 2005).

The Context of Positive and Negative Daily Social Interactions

We investigate these predictions in people's daily positive and negative social interactions. In general, positive social interactions are associated with high levels of well-being, whereas negative social interactions are associated with low levels of well-being (Rook, 2001), irrespective of whether these interactions are with close (Akiyama, Antonucci, Takahashi, & Langfahl, 2003; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010) or peripheral social partners (Nikitin et al., 2014). We assume that habitual approach and avoidance goals strengthen the link between positive and negative social interactions and well-being. Specifically, positive social interactions should be associated with higher levels of well-being the higher the levels of habitual approach goals are. In contrast, negative social interactions should be associated with lower levels of well-being the higher the levels of habitual avoidance goals are. This should be the case because habitual approach goals direct attention to positive social information, lead to a stronger weighing of positive social information, and to attributions of positive social information in a self-serving way, whereas avoidance goals direct attention to negative social information, lead to a stronger weighing of negative social information, and to attributions of negative social information in a self-defeating way (Gable, 2006; Gable & Poore, 2008; Nikitin & Freund, 2011, 2015b; Schoch et al., 2015; Strachman & Gable, 2006). In line with this, Gable and Poore (2008) found that positive daily experiences with romantic partners were more strongly associated with relationship satisfaction in people with high levels of approach goals, whereas negative daily experiences

with romantic partners were more strongly associated with relationship satisfaction in people with high levels of avoidance goals.

Taking a contextualized approach to personality, we argue that the moderating role of social goals for well-being is relationship-specific. More specifically, we assume that people who are highly approach motivated in their peripheral social relationships, experience higher subjective well-being when interacting positively with peripheral social partners. People who are highly approach motivated in their close social relationships should have stronger positive reactions when interacting positively with their close social partners. We assume parallel associations for habitual avoidance goals and well-being. Based on previous research (Gable & Poore, 2008; Schoch et al., 2015), we expect that social approach goals do not affect well-being in negative social encounters, and that social avoidance goals do not affect well-being in positive social encounters. As argued above, this should be the case because approach goals are associated with the preferential processing of positive over negative social information, whereas avoidance goals are associated with the preferential processing of negative over positive social information. For example, Schoch and colleagues (2015) found that approach goals predicted attributions of positive social interactions and avoidance goals predicted attributions of negative social information, but not vice versa.

Finally, we explore whether the proposed differential role of habitual approach and avoidance goals for well-being resulting from positive and negative social interactions, respectively, is affected by people's age. On the one hand, there is some evidence that information processing associated with approach and avoidance goals is similar across different adult age groups (e.g., Nikitin & Freund, 2011; Schoch et al., 2015). On the other hand, based on the proposed age-differential adaptivity of habitual approach and avoidance goals in peripheral social relationships, approach and avoidance goals in less close social relationships might be age-differentially associated with well-being in these relationships. We explore these possibilities in the present research.

The Present Research

Building on the outlined theories and previous research, the present study tests the following hypotheses:

(1) Mean-level differences in habitual levels of approach and avoidance goals. Age-related differences in the strength of habitual social approach and avoidance goals are moderated by relationship closeness: Older adults report higher levels of habitual avoidance goals and lower levels of habitual approach goals than younger adults in peripheral (but not close) relationships. In close relationships, people report higher levels of habitual approach than avoidance goals irrespective of age.

(2) Associations of habitual levels of approach and avoidance goals with daily outcomes. The associations of habitual levels of social approach and avoidance goals with daily outcomes are moderated by age and relationship closeness: The older people are, the less positively are habitual levels of approach goals and the more positively are habitual levels of avoidance goals in peripheral (but not close) relationships associated with the daily outcomes. In close relationships, habitual levels of approach goals are positively, whereas habitual levels of avoidance goals are negatively associated with daily outcomes irrespective of age.

(3) Associations of habitual levels of approach and avoidance goals with daily outcomes in positive and negative social interactions of different levels of closeness. We hypothesize that positive social interactions with close social partners are associated with higher levels of daily outcomes, the more pronounced habitual approach goals in close relationships are. Positive social interactions with peripheral social partners are associated with higher levels of daily outcomes, the more pronounced habitual approach goals peripheral close relationships are. Similarly, we hypothesize that negative social interactions with close social partners are associated with lower levels of daily outcomes, the more pronounced habitual avoidance goals in close relationships are. Negative social interactions with

peripheral social partners are associated with lower levels of daily outcomes, the more pronounced habitual avoidance goals in peripheral relationships are. We explore, whether the predicted associations are further moderated by age.

In order to test these hypotheses, the present study investigated habitual social approach and avoidance goals in relationships of different closeness. We define *relationship closeness* as people's sense of being interconnected with another (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). The closer the relationship, the more strongly are their behaviors, thoughts, and emotions dependent of each other (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989). We use the convoy model of social networks to operationalize relationship closeness (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980). Kahn and Antonucci proposed a model of social relationships guided by the idea that each individual is embedded in a network that is structured by relationship closeness. Kahn and Antonucci proposed three concentric circles of social relationships that are placed around an individual. The innermost circle consists of people who are very close to the individual, are highly valued by the individual, and remain fairly stable across adulthood, typically close family and close friends. The second circle is comprised of people who are less close than those in the first circle, often extended family and friends. Relationships in the third circle tend to be more role-dependent and limited to certain contexts, e.g., neighbors or co-workers. Consequently, the third circle is more sensitive to role changes and less stable.

We conceptualize *social approach and avoidance goals* as habitual strivings for positive and the avoidance of negative social outcomes in social relationships, respectively (Elliot et al., 2006), specifically in very close relationships, close relationships, and peripheral relationships (as defined by the convoy model; Kahn & Antonucci, 1980). We hypothesize that the strenght of habitual approach and avoidance goals and the associations of habitual levels of approach and avoidance goals with daily outcomes are age-independent in the first two circles (very close and close relationships) but varies by age in the third circle (peripheral relationships).

We operationalize *daily outcomes* as daily subjective well-being, daily subjective health, and satisfaction with social encounters, as all are important indicators of people's successful life management (Diener, 2000; Diener & Seligman, 2002).

Finally, we investigate whether participants experienced encounters with social partners in their daily lives by asking participants to report their most positive and their most negative social interaction of the day and to indicate whether these interactions were with very close, close, or peripheral social partners.

Method

Sample

A German online recruitment service recruited a total of $N = 880$ participants (for more details see Nikitin & Freund, 2018).[1] The compensation was €3 for the completed questionnaire and €1 for each completed diary. The sample consisted of $n = 285$ young (18–39 years), $n = 293$ middle-aged (40–59 years), and $n = 302$ older adults (60–83 years). Of those, $N = 813$ participants completed at least one diary. We excluded $n = 68$ participants from the database because they did not answer at least one of two control questions correctly ("For technical purposes, please click on the '5'"). The control questions, designed to catch participants who simply click through the responses in order to receive compensation without actually reading the items, were placed randomly in two different locations in the questionnaire. In addition, one participant in the middle-aged group was excluded because he or she reported an age outside of the specified age range. Of the remaining 744 participants, only $N = 673$ reported their social approach and social avoidance goals in very close, close, and peripheral social relationships and were the effective sample for the analyses reported below. Participants were between 18–83 years old ($M = 49.60$ years, $SD = 16.41$ years; $n =$ 212 young, $n = 232$ middle-aged, and $n = 229$ older adults; 50.4% males). They completed a total of 3,810 diaries.

Procedure

After providing informed consent, participants completed an online questionnaire assessing socio-demographic characteristics and social approach and avoidance goals. Approximately one week later, participants completed an online diary on seven consecutive days (beginning on a Monday). In the diary, they reported their subjective well-being, their subjective psychological and physical health, and their satisfaction with the quantity and the quality of social interactions of the last 24 hours. In addition, they reported their most positive and their most negative social interaction of the last 24 hours and the closeness of the interaction partner in these interactions. At the end of the study, participants were thanked and debriefed. The procedure conformed to the guidelines by the local ethics committee and was considered exempt from formal ethical review.

Measures

Habitual social approach and avoidance goals. Based on the hierarchical mapping technique (Antonucci, 1986), we presented the participants a set of four concentric circles with a smaller circle with the word "Me" in the center. The closest circle was labeled "very close persons," the second "close persons" and the third "less close but still important persons." Participants were instructed to write down the initials of a maximum of three persons per circle. For each of these persons, participants answered four questions assessing habitual approach goals and four questions assessing habitual avoidance goals (adapted from Elliot, Gable, & Mapes, 2006). The initials of the listed person appeared in the questions (e.g., "I am trying to deepen my relationship with XY" for an approach goal; "I am trying to avoid getting embarrassed, betrayed, or hurt by XY" for an avoidance goal; 0 = *not at all true*, 6 = *very true*; for the list of all items, see supplemental materials, Table S1). In the first circle, participants reported $M = 2.76$ ($SD = 0.57$) persons, in the second circle $M = 2.71$ ($SD = 0.63$) persons, and in the third circle $M = 2.67$ ($SD = 0.69$) persons.[2] The internal consistencies for approach goals ranged from $\alpha = .85–.94$. The internal consistencies for avoidance goals

ranged from α = .71–.87, with two exceptions of somewhat lower internal consistencies: the first person in the first circle (α = .65) and the second person in the first circle (α = .68). In addition, we tested configural, metric, and scalar measurement invariance of the goal assessments between the age groups. Out of the 18 models (3 circles × 3 persons × 2 goals orientations), 15 indicated measurement invariance between the age groups (see supplemental materials, Tables S2–S3 for the model parameters and Tables S4–S5 for the estimates in all models). Three models revealed differences in factor loadings (i.e., metric invariance) between the age groups: Younger participants had higher loadings of the approach item "I am trying to share many fun and meaningful experiences with XY" in the very close circle for the first and the second person; middle-aged and older participants had higher loadings of the item "I am trying to avoid disagreements and conflicts with XY" for the second person of the closest circle. In summary, habitual approach and avoidance goals were measured largely equivalently between the three age groups, with few differences in the closest relationships. For the following analyses, approach and avoidance goals were aggregated separately across the persons within each circle, which resulted in six values: approach goals in very close relationships (first circle; reliability α = .78, M = 4.92, SD = 0.97), close relationships (second circle; α = .85, M = 4.33, SD = 1.15), and peripheral relationships (third circle; α = .90, M = 3.47, SD = 1.40), and avoidance goals in very close relationships (α = .85, M = 4.58, SD = 1.05), close relationships (α = .90, M = 4.27, SD = 1.15), and peripheral relationships (α = .92, M = 3.64, SD = 1.36). Social approach and avoidance goals were positively correlated (very close relationships: r = .62, close relationships: r = .67, peripheral relationships: r = .77, see Table 1), which is comparable with or somewhat higher than in previous studies (e.g., r = .56; Impett et al., 2010).[3]

Daily subjective well-being. Daily emotional well-being was assessed by 12 adjectives (e.g., "good", "rested", "uneasy" [recoded]) of the Multidemensional Mood

Questionnaire (Steyer, Schwenkmezger, Notz, & Eid, 1997; "How often did you feel like this in the last 24 hours?; 0 = *never*; 6 = *always*). The internal consistency of the scale ranged from α = .93–.94 (M = 4.10, SD = 1.15). In addition, we assessed general satisfaction as the cognitive component of daily subjective well-being ("All in all, how satisfied are you with the last 24 hours?"; 0 = *not satisfied at all*, 6 = *very satisfied*; M = 4.41, SD = 1.30). Both indicators of daily subjective well-being were positively correlated (r = .84, p < .001 on the aggregated level; r = .70, p < .001 on the daily level) and were aggregated to one composite score (M = 4.26, SD = 1.13).

Daily subjective health. The second daily outcome was *subjective health* (two questions: "All in all, how did you feel physically [psychologically] in the last 24 hours?"; 0 = *very bad*, 6 = *very good*; physical health: M = 4.13, SD = 1.43; psychological health: M = 4.33, SD = 1.46; authors' own development based on one-item assessments of subjective health; e.g., Idler & Benyamini, 1997). The two indicators of subjective health were positively correlated (r = .78, p < .001, on the aggregated level, and r = .71, p < .001, on the daily level) and were aggregated to one composite score (M = 4.23, SD = 1.34).

Daily satisfaction with social interactions. Two items assessed the third daily outcome, that is, participants' satisfaction with the quantity and quality of their social interactions (authors' own development based on the emotional and social component of loneliness; Weiss, 1973): "All in all, how satisfied are you with the quantity (frequency) [the quality] of your social interactions in the last 24 hours?" (0 = *not at all*, 6 = *very much*; quantity satisfaction: M = 4.34, SD = 1.41; quality satisfaction: M = 4.39, SD = 1.36). The two variables were positively correlated (r = .89 on the aggregated level, and r = .78 on the daily level). We aggregated both values to one composite score (M = 4.36, SD = 1.31).[4]

Closeness of social interaction partners in daily social interactions. Participants were asked to think about the most positive and the most negative interpersonal situation during the last 24 hours. For both situations, participants reported how close the person they

had interacted with in the situation was to them (1 = *very close*, 2 = *close*, 3 = *less close*, 4 = *new contact*; see Nikitin & Freund, 2018). For the current analyses, we aggregated the two last categories (less close relationship and new contact) to one category labeled "peripheral relationships." The reason for the aggregation was that we did not assess social goals for new contacts but excluding all social situations with new contacts would unnecessary reduce data points. Supporting the decision to aggregate the two categories, analyses with and without the category "new contact" did not lead to substantially different results in the main analyses. The number of social interactions in different types of relationships closeness, positive and negative social situations, and age groups is reported in Table 2.

Control variables. To rule out possible confounders, we included two prominent demographic variables as covariates in the analyses: participants' gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and partnership status (0 = single, widowed, divorced vs. 1 = married, stable partnership). In addition, we controlled for the day of the week (0 = week days, 1 = weekend days), as weekdays are associated with lower levels of well-being than weekends (Stone, Schneider, & Harter, 2012).

Results

Mean-Level Differences in Habitual Levels of Social Approach and Avoidance Goals

To test the first hypothesis, we explored whether the strength of habitual social goals depended on the goal orientation (approach vs. avoidance), relationship closeness (very close, close, and peripheral relationships), and age group (young, middle-aged, and older adults). A repeated-measures ANOVA with two within-subject factors (goal orientation and relationship closeness) and one between-subject factor (age group) revealed that participants' reports differed significantly between social approach and social avoidance goals, between different levels of relationship closeness, and between different age groups (see Table 3). Participants reported higher levels of social approach ($M = 4.24$, $SE = 0.04$) than social avoidance goals ($M = 4.16$, $SE = 0.04$). They reported higher levels of social goals (both approach and

avoidance) in very close than in close relationships ($M_{diff} = 0.45$, $t[672] = 13.76$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.38, 0.51]), and in close than in peripheral relationships ($M_{diff} = 0.74$, $t[672] = 18.39$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.66, 0.82]). Older participants reported higher levels of social goals than both younger ($M_{diff} = 0.30$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.47]) and middle-aged adults ($M_{diff} = 0.26$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.42]) who did not differ from each other ($p = .64$). There was a significant two-way interaction between age group and relationship closeness, and between goal orientation and relationship closeness. The two-way interaction between goal orientation and age group was not significant.

The main effects and two-way interactions were qualified by a three-way interaction between goal orientation, relationship closeness, and age group. To decompose the three-way interaction, we ran the two-way interaction Goal Orientation × Age Group separately for very close, close, and peripheral social relationships. Whereas goal orientation and age group did not significantly interact in very close and close relationships ($ps \geq .36$), they interacted in peripheral relationships, $F(2, 670) = 4.83$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.24$. As depicted in Figure 1, participants in all age groups reported higher levels of approach than avoidance goals in very close relationships (young adults: $t[211] = 4.49$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.27$; middle-aged adults: $t[231] = 6.58$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.38$; older adults: $t[228] = 5.88$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.34$). In close relationships, the strength of approach and avoidance goals did not differ in any of the age groups ($ps \geq .26$). In peripheral relationships, older and middle-aged adults reported lower levels of approach than avoidance goals (older adults: $t[228] = -5.14$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.22$; middle-aged adults: $t[231] = -2.51$, $p = .01$, $d = -0.12$), whereas young adults' reports of approach and avoidance goals did not differ ($p = .52$). We also explored whether the age groups differed in the strength of approach and avoidance goals in peripheral relationships. This was the case for avoidance goals, $F(2, 670) = 5.49$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Post-hoc analyses revealed that older adults reported more avoidance goals than both younger ($M_{diff} = 0.39$, $p =$

.002, 95% CI [0.14, 0.65]) and middle-aged adults ($M_{diff} = 0.33$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.58]), who did not differ from each other ($p = .64$). Approach goals in peripheral relationships did not significantly differ between the age groups ($p = .34$).

To summarize, supporting our hypotheses, all participants reported higher levels of habitual approach than avoidance goals in very close relationships. Also supporting our hypotheses, older adults reported higher levels of habitual avoidance goals in peripheral relationships than younger and middle-aged adults. Unexpectedly, older adults did not report lower levels of approach goals in peripheral relationships than younger adults. However, the relative strength of approach goals (to the strength of avoidance goals) was already lower in middle-aged adults and the difference was even more pronounced in older adults. Finally, both, levels of approach and avoidance goals, were higher the closer the relationships were, and older compared to middle-aged and younger adults reported higher levels of (approach and avoidance) goals across all relationships.

Associations of Habitual Levels of Social Approach and Avoidance Goals with Daily Outcomes

Data-analysis strategy. To test our second and third hypothesis, we used multilevel modelling, which is recommended when data are nested within different levels as in our study (Level 1 = days, and Level 2 = persons; e.g., Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). We ran a random-intercept random-slope model with maximum likelihood estimates of the parameters. We included random effects of Level 1 variables (closeness of interaction partners in daily social interactions). The inclusion of habitual goals as random effects did not substantially change the results. For reasons of parsimony, we decided to not include habitual goals as random effects in the following analyses. The control variables were added at Level 1 (day of the week) and Level 2 (gender, partnership status). Age was introduced as a continuous variable. Age and habitual goals were grand-mean centered. Social encounters were included as dummy variables. We analyzed the data with the linear mixed-models procedure using SPSS

Statistics Version 23 and probed significant interactions either by using a subgroup-analysis approach, in which the data are split into groups and the analyses are repeated on these subgroups, or by using the Johnson-Neyman analysis of areas of significance (Esarey & Sumner, 2018) in RStudio (RStudio Team, 2015).

Very close relationships. First, we investigated whether levels of approach and avoidance goals in very close relationships predicted daily subjective well-being, daily subjective health, and daily satisfaction with social encounters. In addition, we tested whether these associations differed when participants experienced their most positive or most negative encounter of the day with very close persons compared to close or peripheral interaction partners, and whether age moderated any of these associations. We ran three models for the three criterion variables. The results are presented in Table 4. In each model, we included control variables (gender, family status, day of the week) and levels of approach and avoidance goals in close and peripheral relationships as covariates (reported in the supplemental materials, Table S10).

As Table 4 shows, levels of social approach goals in very close relationships were positively associated with subjective well-being and with satisfaction with social encounters, whereas levels of social avoidance goals in very close relationships were negatively associated with subjective health. Age did not moderate any of the associations between goals and daily outcomes (*p*s ≥ .22). There was only an unpredicted two-way interaction between levels of approach and avoidance goals as predictors of satisfaction with social encounters, which was further qualified by a three-way interaction between levels of approach goals, levels of avoidance goals, and age. We explored this interaction by splitting the sample by age group. We found that in the oldest group (but not in the younger or the middle-aged group, *p*s ≥ .24), levels of approach and avoidance goals interacted in the prediction of satisfaction with social encounters (b = .15, 95% CI [.05, .26], p = .004). The Johnson-Neyman analysis of areas of significance revealed that only when the value of approach goals was lower than 4.59

(0.33 below the group mean), levels of avoidance goals were significantly negatively associated with satisfaction with daily social encounters (at a .05 *p*-level). Thus, higher levels of approach goals in very close relationships seemed to buffer the otherwise negative association between levels of avoidance goals and satisfaction with social encounters in the oldest group.

We found the same three-way interaction between levels of approach goals, levels of avoidance goals, and age for subjective well-being and subjective health (see Table 4). Similar to satisfaction with social encounters, levels of approach and avoidance goals interacted in the prediction of subjective well-being in the oldest group ($b = .10$, 95% CI [.01, .19], $p = .03$), but not in the younger or the middle-aged group ($ps \geq .39$). Again, we ran the Johnson-Neyman analysis and found that only when the value of approach goals was lower than 4.19 (0.73 below the group mean), levels of avoidance goals were significantly negatively associated with subjective well-being. Similarly, levels of approach and avoidance goals interacted in the prediction of subjective health in the oldest group ($b = .11$, 95% CI [.004, .22], $p = .04$), but not in the younger or the middle-aged group ($ps \geq .18$). The Johnson-Neyman analysis revealed that only when the value of approach goals was lower than 4.11 (0.81 below the group mean), levels of avoidance goals were significantly negatively associated with subjective health.

The role of positive and negative social encounters. Positive encounters with very close persons (compared to positive encounters with other persons) were positively associated with subjective well-being and satisfaction with social encounters, but not with subjective health. Negative encounters with very close persons (compared to negative encounters with other persons) were negatively associated with subjective well-being and subjective health but not with satisfaction with social encounters. Age moderated the association between positive encounters and subjective well-being as well as between positive encounters and subjective health. Positive encounters were significantly associated with subjective well-being in the

middle-aged (b = .14, 95% CI [.04, .24], p = .01) and the older group (b = .15, 96% CI [.06, .25], p = .002), but not in the young group (b = .001, 95% CI [-.11, .11], p = .99). We found the same pattern of results for subjective health: young adults (b = -.03, 95% CI [-.17, .10], p = .63), middle-aged adults (b = .10, 95% CI [-.02, .23], p = .10), older adults (b = .12, 95% CI [-.002, .24], p = .05).

To test our hypotheses, we explored whether positive or negative encounters with very close persons interacted with social goals in very close relationships in the prediction of daily outcomes. There were three unpredicted significant interactions: Positive encounters and levels of social avoidance goals interacted in the predictions of subjective well-being and subjective health. In the case of satisfaction with social encounters, this two-way interaction was further moderated by age. We first explored the two-way interactions. Johnson-Neyman analysis revealed that participants with relatively high levels of avoidance goals (5.89, which is 1.31 above the sample mean) did not report higher levels of subjective well-being when their experienced their most positive social interaction with a very close person compared to other persons (at a .05 p-level). Similarly, participants with relatively high levels of avoidance goals (5.01, which is 0.43 above the sample mean) did not report higher levels of subjective health when their experienced their most positive social interaction with a very close person (compared to other persons).

In order to explore the three-way interaction (Positive Encounters × Avoidance Goals × Age), we first split the sample by age group and found that the two-way interaction between positive encounters and levels of avoidance goals was only significant for young adults (b = .26, 95% CI [.09, .42], p = .002, all other ps ≥ .66). We explored the two-way interaction in the youngest age group by running the Johnson-Neyman analysis of areas of significance but found no significant associations between positive encounters and avoidance goals in the range of observed data (at a .05 p-level).

To summarize, the results confirmed our hypothesis that habitual levels of approach and avoidance goals in very close relationships predict daily outcomes irrespective of age, although the associations were different for the different indicators of daily outcomes: Levels of approach goals were positively associated with subjective well-being and satisfaction with social encounters, whereas levels of avoidance goals were negatively associated with subjective health. The only age-related difference with respect to habitual goals suggested a buffering effect of approach goals for the otherwise negative associations between avoidance goals and daily outcomes in the oldest age group. Unexpectedly, the associations between levels of approach goals in very close relationships and daily outcomes were largely unaffected by the occurrence of the most positive or the most negative social interaction of the day with very close persons. For avoidance goals, we found an unpredicted diminishing effect of high levels of avoidance goals on the otherwise positive associations of positive encounters in very close relationships with subjective well-being and subjective health. Finally, positive encounters with very close persons were associated with subjective well-being (only in the middle-aged and the older group) and satisfaction with social encounters, suggesting that people (particularly older people) feel happier and more satisfied with their social encounters when they experience their most positive interaction of the day with a very close person (compared to other persons). In contrast, participants felt less happy and reported lower health when they had the most negative interaction of the day with a very close person (compared to other persons).

Close relationships. We applied the same data-analytical strategy to investigate whether levels of approach and avoidance goals in close relationships predicted daily subjective well-being, daily subjective health, and daily satisfaction with social encounters, whether these associations differed when participants experienced their most positive or most negative encounter of the day with a close person compared to very close or peripheral persons, and whether age moderated any of these associations. Again, we ran three models for

the three criterion variables. The results are presented in Table 5. In each model, we included control variables (gender, family status, day of the week) and approach and avoidance goals in very close and peripheral relationships as covariates (reported in the supplemental materials, Table S11).

In contrast to very close relationships, levels of approach and avoidance goals in close relationships did not predict any of the daily outcomes (see Table 5). There were also no significant interactions between goals, age, and/or positive and negative encounters in close relationships.

Peripheral relationships. Finally, we conducted the same analyses in peripheral relationships. Again, we ran three models for the three criterions with levels of approach and avoidance goals in peripheral relationships, positive and negative encounters in peripheral relationships, age, and their interactions as predictors. The results are presented in Table 6. In each model, we again included control variables (gender, family status, day of the week) and approach and avoidance goals in very close and close relationships as covariates (see supplemental materials, Table S12).

As can be seen in Table 6, levels of approach goals in peripheral relationships were positively associated with subjective well-being. No other associations between goals in peripheral relationships and daily outcomes were statistically significant. However, and supporting our hypotheses, the associations between goals in peripheral relationships and daily outcomes were moderated by age for subjective health and subjective well-being as criterions (see Figure 2). We first explored the interaction of approach goals and age. We found that levels of approach goals in peripheral relationships were positively associated with subjective well-being (b = .26, 95% CI [.10, .43], p = .002) and subjective health (b = .28, 95% CI [.09, .47], p = .01) in young adults, but not in middle-aged adults (subjective well-being: b = .12, 95% CI [-.04, .28], p = .13; subjective health: b = .09, 95% CI [-.12, .29], p = .42) and older adults (subjective well-being: b = -.06, 95% CI [-.22, .11], p = .51; subjective

health: b = -.09, 95% CI [-.29, .11], p = .39). Next, we explored the interaction between avoidance goals and age. We found that levels of avoidance goals were positively associated with subjective well-being (b = .21, 95% CI [02, .40], p = .03) and subjective health (b = .23, 95% CI [.01, .46], p = .04) in older adults but not in middle-aged adults (subjective well-being: b = .10, 95% CI [-.08, .27], p = .27; subjective health: b = .12, 95% CI [-.11, .35], p = .32). In young adults, there was a non-significant trend for negative associations between levels of avoidance goals and subjective well-being (b = -.19, 95% CI [-.39, .02], p = .07) and levels of avoidance goals and subjective health (b = -.20, 95% CI [-.44, .04], p = .097).

The role of positive and negative social encounters. Positive encounters with peripheral social partners (compared to very close and close persons) were negatively associated with subjective well-being, subjective health, and satisfaction with social encounters, whereas negative encounters with peripheral social partners (compared to very close and close persons) were even positively associated with subjective well-being and subjective health. In addition, positive encounters and levels of approach goals in peripheral relationships interacted in the prediction of subjective well-being and subjective health. We ran the Johnson-Neyman analysis and found that when the value of approach goals was higher than 5.64 (2.17 above the sample mean), the negative association between positive encounters and subjective well-being was no longer significant (on a .05 p-level). In other words, participants with high levels of habitual approach goals in peripheral relationships reported similar levels of subjective well-being when they experienced their most positive social interaction of the day with a peripheral social partner as when they experienced it with a close or very close social partner. Participants with relatively low levels of habitual approach goals in peripheral relationships reported lower levels of subjective well-being when they experienced their most positive social interaction of the day with a peripheral social partner than when they experienced it with a close or very close social partner. We found similar results for subjective health: Only when the value of approach goals was higher than 4.76

(1.29 above the sample mean), the negative association between positive encounters and subjective health was no more significant.

Regarding avoidance goals, we found a three-way interaction between levels of avoidance goals, positive encounters, and age and between levels of avoidance goals, negative encounters, and age predicting satisfaction with daily social encounters. As we did not find significant two-way interaction of habitual levels of social avoidance goals and positive or negative social encounters with peripheral social partners in any of the three age groups (all $ps \geq .10$), we explored whether the three-way interaction was qualified by differences in the associations between age and levels of social avoidance goals in the positive and the negative social encounters. This was the case: Age moderated the association between levels of avoidance goals in peripheral social relationships and satisfaction with social encounters more strongly when participants reported having the most positive interaction of the day with a peripheral social partner ($b = .02$, 95% CI [.01, 02], $p < .001$) than when they did not ($b = .01$, 95% CI [.0004, .01], $p = .04$). In the oldest age group, levels of avoidance goals in peripheral relationships were more strongly associated with satisfaction with social encounters when the participant experienced the most positive social interaction of the day with a peripheral social partner ($b = .44$, 95% CI [.14, 75], $p = .01$) than when he or she experienced the most positive social interaction of the day with another person ($b = .21$, 95% CI [.002, .41], $p = .048$). The association between levels of avoidance goals and satisfaction with social encounters did not reach statistical significance in any of the other age groups and conditions ($ps \geq .10$).

The results were similar for the interaction between age and levels of avoidance goals in negative social encounters with peripheral social partners: The interaction between age and levels of avoidance goals was only significant when participants experienced the most negative interaction of the day with a peripheral social partner. An exploration of the interaction revealed that only in the oldest age group, the association between levels of

avoidance goals and satisfaction with social encounters was significant and positive (b = .35, 95% CI [.13, .56], p = .002; all others ps ≥ .06).

To summarize, habitual levels of approach and avoidance goals in peripheral relationships predicted daily well-being differentially dependent on (a) participants' age and (b) the occurrence of interactions with peripheral social partners. With respect to age, levels of approach goals were positively associated with subjective well-being and subjective health for young, but not for middle-aged and older adults. In contrast, levels of avoidance goals were positively associated with subjective well-being and subjective health for older but not for middle-aged or younger adults. Surprisingly, the associations between levels of avoidance goals and satisfaction with social encounters in the oldest age group were more strongly positive when the participants reported having the most positive interaction with a peripheral social partner but also when they reported having the most negative interaction with a peripheral social partner.

With respect to interactions with peripheral social partners, positive encounters with peripheral social partners (compared to encounters with closer social partners) were associated with lower levels of subjective well-being, subjective health, and satisfaction with social encounters, whereas negative encounters were associated with higher levels of subjective well-being and subjective health. However, and supporting our hypotheses, the negative associations between positive encounters in peripheral relationships (compared to close and very close relationships) and daily outcomes (subjective well-being and subjective health) diminished when participants reported relatively high habitual levels of approach goals in peripheral relationships, suggesting that for these participants, positive encounters in peripheral relationships were as rewarding as positive encounters in more close relationships.

Discussion

It has been repeatedly argued that development is an ongoing and dynamic interaction of a person with his or her environment (for a summary see Nikitin & Freund, in press).

People make choices, they set and pursue goals according to their current social and developmental contexts and tasks (Baltes et al., 2006; McAdams & Olson, 2010; Roberts & Wood, 2006). Based on this theoretical perspective, the present research investigated individual differences in levels of social approach and avoidance goals and their role for daily subjective well-being, subjective health, and satisfaction with social encounters across different age groups and across different levels of relationship closeness.

The findings of the present research largely supported our hypotheses: Habitual levels of approach goals in very close relationships were positively and habitual levels of avoidance goals negatively associated with daily outcomes. These relations were not affected by age. However, age moderated the association between levels of social approach and avoidance goals in peripheral relationships and daily outcomes. Subgroup analyses showed that levels of social approach goals were positively associated with daily outcomes in young adults, but not in middle-aged or older adults. In contrast, levels of social avoidance goals were positively associated with daily outcomes in older adults, but not in middle-aged or young adults. These results support the hypothesis of an age-differential role of social approach and avoidance goals in peripheral social relationships and mirror the findings on age-related mean-level differences in levels of approach and avoidance goals. In addition, we found that levels of approach and avoidance goals moderated some of the associations between the daily social context (i.e., whether people experienced their most positive or their most negative interaction of the day with a very close, close, or a peripheral social partner) and daily outcomes. We discuss both predicted and unpredicted findings and their implications below.

Mean-Level Differences in Habitual Levels of Approach and Avoidance Goals

All participants reported higher levels social goals (both approach and avoidance) in their very close relationships, followed by close, and finally by peripheral relationships. Based on the centrality of very close relationships for people's lives across adulthood (Blieszner, 2006; Feeney, 2007; Gable & Impett, 2012; Reis & Rusbult, 2004), this finding

suggests that very close relationships are characterized by high levels of social goals, irrespective of the goal orientation towards approaching positive or avoiding negative outcomes. In other words, the more central a relationship is, the more are people motivated to achieve positive outcomes but also to avoid threats in these highly valuable relationships (see also Nikitin & Freund, 2019). This might be the case because positive as well as negative outcomes in very close relationships strongly impact people's subjective well-being, health, and satisfaction. This interpretation is not only supported by previous research on the consequences of positive and negative social relationships (Akiyama et al., 2003; Diener & Seligman, 2002), but also by the differences in the experience of positive and negative social encounters in relationships differing in their degree of closeness in the present study. When participants experienced their most positive interaction of the day with a very close person (compared to less close social partners), they reported the highest levels of daily well-being outcomes. Conversely, when they experienced the most negative interaction of the day with a very close person, participants also reported the lowest levels of daily well-being outcomes.

Despite the stronger social motivation in very close relationships, approach and avoidance goals were not equally strong in these relationships: Participants of all ages reported higher levels of habitual approach goals than habitual avoidance goals. This finding is in line with previous research showing that very close relationships are generally experienced as positive and that people are generally highly motivated to achieve positive outcomes such as love and intimacy in their very close relationships (McAdams & Vaillant, 1982). Supporting previous research, the current study found not only that people were more strongly approach than avoidance motivated in their very close relationships but that they also experienced their very close relationships in their daily encounters mostly as positive. Almost half of their most positive encounters (48.3%) but only about a quarter of their most negative encounters (26.1%, see Table 2) were with a very close person. Older and middle-aged adults reported even more positive encounters with very close persons (50.9% and 49.0%,

respectively) than younger adults (44.5%), and they also reported higher levels of subjective well-being and satisfaction than younger adults when they experienced their most positive interaction of the day with a very close person. These findings fit with previous research showing that very close relationships grow better with age (e.g., Luong, Charles, & Fingerman, 2011), which is commonly explained by older adults' better emotion-regulation strategies (Gross et al., 1997), better everyday problem-solving strategies (Blanchard-Fields, 2007), or the focus on the positive aspects of social relationships (Reed, Chan, & Mikels, 2014). The current study provides an additional explanation: Older adults in the current study reported higher levels of both approach and avoidance goals in their social relationships than did younger and middle-aged adults (see also Footnote 3, for stronger associations between approach and avoidance goals in close relationships with increasing age). It is possible that older people more strongly value their social relationships, which might contribute to their higher well-being in these relationships. An alternative explanation is that older participants in the current study reported relationship partners who are closer to them than did younger and middle-aged adults. As relationship closeness was positively associated with the strength of social (approach and avoidance) goals, older people might also have reported higher levels of social goals in their relationships. Future research is needed to disentangle these alternative interpretations.

Supporting the mean-level hypothesis, older adults reported higher levels of habitual avoidance goals in peripheral relationships than younger and middle-aged adults. Unexpectedly, older adults did not report lower levels of approach goals in less close relationships than younger adults, although the proportion of approach to avoidance goals was negative already in middle-aged adults. These findings replicate previous studies that show that it is particularly higher avoidance motivation in older adults that drives the age-related differences in approach and avoidance goals (Nikitin et al., 2012, 2014). It is an open question why younger adults did not report higher levels of habitual approach goals in peripheral

relationships than the other age groups. One possible explanation is that approach goals as assessed in the current and previous studies focus on possible positive outcomes in social relationships, not merely on approaching (novel) social contacts. It is possible that although younger people are more motivated to approach new social contacts than older age groups (Fung, Carstensen, & Lutz, 1999), people are equally motivated to experience positive interactions in their peripheral social relationships irrespective of age. However, as approaching positive outcomes in peripheral relationships serves establishing of one's social network (Gable, 2006), approach goals in peripheral relationships might be more beneficial for younger compared to older adults, which is also supported by the present findings on the age-differential associations between approach goals in peripheral relationships and daily outcomes.

Associations of Habitual Levels of Social Approach and Avoidance Goals with Daily Outcomes

Very close relationships. Supporting our second hypothesis, habitual levels of social approach goals in very close relationships were positively associated with daily outcomes, whereas habitual levels of social avoidance goals were negatively associated with daily outcomes. This finding illustrates the centrality of very close relationships (e.g., with one's spouse, closest family, best friends) across adulthood (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Ryff, 1995) for the satisfaction of the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Interestingly, levels of social approach and avoidance goals predicted different daily outcomes. Whereas levels of approach goals were positive predictors of daily subjective well-being and satisfaction with daily social encounters, levels of social avoidance goals were significantly negatively correlated with daily subjective health. These results are in line with the notion that approach and avoidance goals work through different processes: Approach goals enhance the exposure to positive social events, whereas avoidance goals enhance the reactivity to negative social events (Gable, 2006; Nikitin et al., 2012; Schoch et al., 2015). Positive social events

might make people happier and more satisfied but might not be highly relevant for people's health (Uchino et al., 2012). In contrast, negative social events are stressful and, thus, particularly detrimental for people's health (e.g., Newsom, Mahan, Rook, & Krause, 2008). This interpretation is further supported by the current findings on the associations between positive and negative social encounters with very close persons and daily outcomes in the current study.

With respect to age, we found an unpredicted three-way interaction effect of age, levels of approach goals, and levels of avoidance goals on all daily outcomes. In the older (but not in the middle-aged or the younger) age group, higher levels of approach goals buffered the otherwise negative associations between levels of avoidance goals and daily outcomes. As we did not predict these three-way interactions, we do not want to speculate on their theoretical implications. Future studies are needed to replicate these findings before we can conclude that approach goals in very close relationships have buffering effects for older adults' avoidance goals in these relationships.

The role of positive and negative social encounters. In contrast to our third hypothesis, positive social interactions with very close persons did not interact with levels of approach goals in very close relationships in the prediction of daily outcomes, and negative social interactions with very close persons did not interact with levels of avoidance goals in very close relationships in the prediction of daily outcomes. One reason for the missing moderation effects might be that we did not assess all participants' daily encounters but only the most positive and the most negative ones. It is possible that participants experienced social encounters with very close relationships but did not mention them in their reports of the most positive and the most negative interactions of the day. This explanation is supported by findings showing that people experience the majority of their daily social interactions with close social partners (e.g., Pietromonaco & Barrett, 1997).

In contrast to our prediction that avoidance goals do not predict daily outcomes associated with positive social interactions, we found that levels of avoidance goals in very close relationships moderated the associations between positive encounters in these relationships and daily outcomes (subjective well-being and subjective health). Specifically, high habitual levels of avoidance goals diminished the otherwise positive association between positive encounters in very close relationships and daily outcomes. This might be the case because strong avoidance goals lead to biased perceptions of information even in situations that are primarily positive. In fact, social situations are generally complex and leave room for motive-related interpretation (McClelland, 1985). In line with this explanation, Strachman and Gable (2006) found that people high in social avoidance motivation tend to interpret neutral information in a negative way.

Close relationships. With regard to close relationships (the middle circle), the present study found no associations between social goals and daily outcomes. This could be the case because the circle of close relationships is somewhat ambivalent in terms of relationship closeness. It could entail relationships that are relatively close (that should yield age-invariant associations between social goals and daily outcomes) but also relationships that are relatively less close (that should yield age-differential associations between social goals and daily outcomes). We cannot test this hypothesis in the current study. However, our results indicate that social approach and avoidance goals have relationship-specific outcomes. Future research needs to focus more on social approach and avoidance goals in specific types of relationships.

Peripheral relationships. The findings on social approach and avoidance goals in peripheral relationships supported our hypotheses. Levels of social approach and avoidance goals were age-differentially associated with daily outcomes. These results illustrate that goals that are positively associated with daily outcomes in young adulthood are not necessarily positively associated with daily outcomes when people get older and vice versa. We argue that this is the case because developmental tasks change across adulthood and so

does the role of social approach and avoidance goals. However, age is only a proxy for developmental tasks and people can substantially differ in how normative or non-normative their development is (Freund et al., 2009). Although there is some evidence for the role of developmental tasks for personality development in adulthood (Hutteman et al., 2014), more research is needed to test the association between developmental tasks and social goals directly. Supporting the argument that the age-differential outcomes of social approach and avoidance goals are associated with age-dependent developmental tasks, younger and older adults who entered a similar social transition (i.e., a move from a familiar to a new social environment) reported similarly positive daily outcomes associated with social approach goals and similarly negative daily outcomes associated with social avoidance goals (Nikitin et al., 2012).

In addition, it is an interesting question for future research to test what mechanisms underlie the age-differential associations between social approach and avoidance goals and daily outcomes. For example, recent experimental research found that social avoidance compared to social approach goals reduce responsiveness to social interaction partners, but that this reduction is less pronounced in older adults (Nikitin & Freund, 2019). Older adults, due to their more effective emotion-regulation strategies (Blanchard-Fields, 2007; Gross et al., 1997; Labouvie-Vief, DeVoe, & Bulka, 1989; Lawton, Kleban, Rajagopal, & Dean, 1992), might be better able to counteract the negative effects of social avoidance goals and to maintain high levels of responsiveness to their social partners (but see Charles, 2010). Responsiveness, in turn, is one of the most prominent precursors of positive social relationships (Reis & Gable, 2015).

The role of positive and negative social encounters. Overall, positive social encounters in peripheral relationships were associated with lower levels of daily outcomes compared to positive social encounters in closer relationships. However, these associations were moderated by participants' habitual approach motivation in peripheral relationships. For

participants with high levels of habitual approach goals in peripheral relationships, positive encounters in these relationships were as rewarding in terms of daily outcomes (subjective well-being and subjective health) as positive encounters in closer relationships. This might be the case because positive social encounters with peripheral or new social partners rarely just happen passively, but they have to be actively approached (Gable, 2006). Thus, only when people create opportunities for positive social encounters, do they profit from the high levels of approach goals in their encounters with peripheral social partners with respect to daily outcomes. Interestingly, this association was not moderated by age, suggesting that although older people generally do not profit from their approach goals in peripheral relationships, they do so when they experience positive encounters with peripheral social partners. It is an interesting direction for future research to investigate why this is the case. One possibility is that other adults react less positively to approach attempts of older than to those of younger adults (note that the present findings suggest that older people are not less approach motivated in peripheral social relationships). In fact, older adults are perceived less favorably than younger age groups (e.g., less competent and attractive) and people are less willing to interact with older people than with younger age groups (Kite, Stockdale, Whitley, & Johnson, 2005). Therefore, older adults' approach goals in peripheral relationships might lead to less positive social encounters than younger adults' approach goals.

The associations between positive and negative encounters and daily outcomes (satisfaction with social encounters) were moderated by levels of social avoidance goals only in older adults. Interestingly, older adults who reported high levels of avoidance goals in peripheral relationships reported more satisfaction with social encounters when their most positive and also when their most negative interaction of the day occurred with a peripheral social partner. This finding suggests that avoidance goals in peripheral relationships might be adaptive for older adults' satisfaction with social relationships across different social encounters, even negative ones. However, this finding needs replication as it is in some

contrast to results of previous studies. For example, an experimental lab study showed that older adults reported lower levels of well-being in a negative interaction with a stranger when they pursue avoidance (compared to approach) goals (Nikitin et al., 2014). In addition, a recent publication based on the same data as used in the present research found age-differential associations between situational approach and avoidance goals and daily social well-being (feelings of social integration and social isolation) but no moderation by relationship closeness (Nikitin & Freund, 2018). Both studies (Nikitin & Freund, 2018; Nikitin et al., 2014) investigated situational approach and avoidance goals (in contrast to habitual goals as in the present research) rooting in motivational dispositions but being also reactions to incentives and threats elicited by the situational affordances (Gable, 2006; Gable & Berkman, 2008; Gable & Impett, 2012). Thus, future research might benefit from more systematic investigation of the differences between habitual and situational social goals (see also Dunlop, 2015; Slatcher & Vazire, 2009).

Strengths and Limitations

The present research has many strengths such as the relatively large sample of a wide age range, the diary method, the assessment of social approach and avoidance goals in specific social relationships, and the multivariate assessment of daily outcomes (i.e., subjective well-being, subjective health, and satisfaction with social encounters). However, the present study also has some limitations. First, it is based on a convenience sample, which reduces the generalizability of the findings. The selectivity applies particularly to older adults—older adults who participate in an online study may not be representative for the older population in general as this age group may be less familiar with the use of new information technology than other age groups. However, the number of older adults using internet is rapidly growing (Zickuhr & Madden, 2012). In addition, the representativeness of the sample might be problematic for the mean-level differences but less for the associations between the assessed variables.

With respect to the hierarchical mapping technique, we did not assess the type of the reported relationship (e.g., parent, romantic partner etc.). Relationship type might be an important information with regard to social goals. Similarly, beyond the placement in the three circles, closeness was not further scaled by the participants, such that even within one circle relationship partners might have varied regarding their closeness. Potential difference in closeness might account for some of the age-related mean-level differences in the present study (note that there were also some differences in the factor loadings between the age groups with respect to very close relationships). Future studies focusing on social goals in specific relationships should therefore include the information on relationship type and a more fine-grained assessment of closeness to test for alternative explanations of the findings.

A caveat for the interpretation of the present findings is the correlative nature of the study. Although there is longitudinal (Gable, 2006; Impett et al., 2010) and experimental evidence (Nikitin & Freund, 2019; Nikitin et al., 2014; Strachman & Gable, 2006) for the effects of social approach and avoidance goals on subjective well-being, the present research cannot rule out the reversed causality. In other words, it is possible that people who experience lower levels of daily subjective well-being, daily subjective health, and daily satisfaction with social encounters tend to set lower levels of approach goals and higher levels of avoidance goals. In addition, these people may also profit less from high approach goals or may be more affected by high avoidance goals than people who experience higher levels of the daily outcomes. In fact, people tend to pursue goals that fit their capacities (Brandtstädter, Wentura, & Rothermund, 1999; Freund & Baltes, 1998; Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schulz, 2010). As the pursuit of approach goals needs more resources than the pursuit of avoidance goals (Schnelle, Brandstätter, & Knöpfel, 2010), people with lower levels of resources (as indicated by lower levels of subjective daily outcomes) might adjust their goals to these lower levels of resources. Thus, more experimental research is needed to prove the proposed causality of the relationship between goals and daily outcomes.

Finally, although we included a measurement of relationship closeness in participants' daily social interactions, this measurement was limited to two interactions each day (the most positive and the most negative interaction), which is not a representative sample of people's daily interactions. This limitation might account for the fact that some hypothesized Goals × Situation interactions failed to appear. Thus, future studies are needed to more intensively explore whether social goals in very close relationships are more relevant for social interactions within very close relationships than for social interactions in less close relationships and vice versa.

Conclusions

Based on self-regulation models (McAdams & Olson, 2010; Roberts & Wood, 2006) and on models of adult social development (Antonucci, Fiori, Birditt, & Jackey, 2010; Carstensen et al., 1999; Charles & Carstensen, 2010; Kahn & Antonucci, 1980), we argued that people are active agents who shape their social development by setting and pursuing social approach and avoidance goals. As people move through adulthood, social goals might change both in their strength and in their adaptivity. The present research demonstrated that age differences in habitual levels of social goals and the associations of habitual levels of social goals and daily outcomes are relationship specific: In closest relationships, people's social goals are similarly strong and similarly strongly associated with daily outcomes across different age groups. In contrast, peripheral relationships do not only elicit different levels of approach and avoidance goals in younger and older adults, but they are also differentially associated with daily subjective well-being, subjective health, and satisfaction with social encounters. The age-related differences in levels of social approach and avoidance goals and their concomitants in peripheral relationships may reflect different developmental tasks and challenges in young, middle-aged, and older adulthood. In contrast, social goals in the closest relationships and their concomitants seem to be age-invariant, illustrating the centrality of these relationships across the lifespan.

Footnotes

[1]Two publications are based on the same data set (Nikitin & Freund, 2018, 2019, Study 3). There is no overlap between these publications and the present research in any of the variables (with the exception of some control variables and the variable measuring relationship closeness in the most positive and the most negative interaction of the day). The full set of variables as well as the data set and the syntax for the present analyses can be found here: read-only link for the review process. The hypotheses were not preregistered.

[2]Using a mixed-design ANOVA, we explored whether the number of reported persons differed between the circles and between the three age groups. Participants reported more persons in the first ($M = 2.76$, $SE = 0.02$) than in the second circle ($M = 2.71$, $SE = 0.02$, $t[672] = 2.03$, $p = 0.04$), and more persons in the second than in the third circle ($M = 2.67$, $SE = 0.03$, $t[672] = 2.15$, $p = 0.03$), $F(2, 669) = 6.26$, $p = .002$, $d = 0.27$. Contrary to results of studies using an unrestricted number of potential nominations (we used the circle-method limiting the maximum number of nominations to three social partners per circle), these differences were not moderated by age ($F < 0$, $p = .61$), nor did the number of reported persons differ significantly between the three age groups, $F(2, 670) = 2.05$, $p = .13$.

[3]We explored whether the strength of the association between habitual social approach and avoidance goals was moderated by age, relationship closeness, or their interaction. To that end, we conducted a multilevel analysis with Level 1 = relationship closeness and Level 2 = person (for detailed results, see Table S6 in the supplemental materials). Levels of habitual approach and avoidance goals were positively correlated. The strength of the correlation was moderated both by age and relationship closeness, and by their interaction. In order to explore the three-way interaction, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses with age, levels of approach goals, and the interaction between age and levels of approach goals as predictors of levels of avoidance goals separately for each circle (very close, close, and peripheral relationships; for detailed results, see Table S7–S9 in the supplemental materials).

The results revealed age-related differences in the strength of the association between levels of approach and avoidance goals in very close and close relationships, indicating stronger associations with increasing age. In peripheral relationships, age did not moderate the correlation between levels of approach and avoidance goals (see Table 1 for all correlations).

[4]We explored the correlations between age and daily outcomes. As shown in Table 1, age was positively correlated with all indicators of daily outcomes (subjective well-being, subjective health, and satisfaction with daily social encounters). This is not unusual in convenience cross-sectional samples (Daig, Herschbach, Lehmann, Knoll, & Decker, 2009; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Isaacowitz, Charles, & Carstensen, 2000; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998; Piazza & Charles, 2006).

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Table 1

Bivariate Correlations (Diary Variables Are Aggregated Across the Days)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. Age	-	**.12**	**.08**	**.14**	**.15**	.04	**.13**	**.23**	**.10**	**.12**
2. Approach goals very close r.	.08/-.04/.13	-	**.62**	**.55**	**.48**	**.27**	**.30**	**.12**	**.08**	**.20**
3. Avoidance goals very close r.	.07/-.08/**.18**	**.62/.61/.63**	-	**.40**	**.66**	**.22**	**.42**	**.08**	.02	**.10**
4. Approach goals close r.	-.06/-.02/.08	**.46/.55/.62**	**.31/.40/.46**	-	**.67**	**.51**	**.48**	**.14**	.07	**.20**
5. Avoidance goals close r.	-.04/-.05/**.16**	**.49/.45/.50**	**.57/.65/.73**	**.52/.72/.71**	-	**.46**	**.68**	**.14**	.06	**.16**
6. Approach goals peripheral r.	-.05/.04/**.14**	**.25/.30/.25**	**.14/.22/.28**	**.45/.60/.49**	**.48/.46/.46**	-	**.77**	**.20**	**.16**	**.20**
7. Avoidance goals peripheral r.	-.05/-.01/**.22**	**.25/.33/.29**	**.27/.46/.48**	**.34/.56/.49**	**.67/.68/.68**	**.82/.73/.79**	-	**.19**	**.14**	**.20**
8. Subjective well-being	.05/.07/.13	**.22**/-.01/.11	.13/-.08/**.14**	**.15**/.03/**.15**	**.14**/-.02/**.22**	**.27/.17/.17**	**.18**/.07/**.26**	-	**.84**	**.66**
9. Subjective health	.03/-.01/.05	.13/-.04/**.14**	.08/**-.15**/.10	.09/.001/.08	.09/-.06/.12	**.20/.13/.14**	.10/.07/**.20**	**.82/.87/.82**	-	**.67**
10. Satisfaction with social encounters	.03/.08/.05	**.29**/.12/**.18**	**.18**/.02/.11	**.27/.14/.17**	**.23**/.07/**.16**	**.26/.13/.22**	**.17**/.13/**.25**	**.59/.62/.73**	**.54/.65/.76**	-

Note. Significant correlations ($p < .05$) are presented in bolt. The upper half of the correlation matrix reports correlations across the entire sample.

The lower half reports correlations within the age groups: Young/Middle-Aged/Older Adults. r . = relationships.

Table 2

Distribution of Social Interactions Across Cells as Defined by the Valence of the Situation, Relationship Closeness, and Age

Social Interactions	Age Group			Total	$\chi^2(2)$	*p*
	Young	Middle-Aged	Older			
The Most Positive Social Interactions						
Very Close Relationships	510 (44.5%)[a]	637 (49.0%)[b]	694 (50.9%)[b]	1841 (48.3%)	10.51	.01
Close Relationships	323 (28.2%)[a]	292 (22.5%)[b]	251 (18.4%)[c]	866 (22.7%)	34.02	<.001
Peripheral Relationships	313 (27.3%)	371 (28.5%)	419 (30.7%)	1103 (29.0%)	3.68	.16
Total	1146	1300	1364	3810		
The Most Negative Social Interactions						
Very Close Relationships	278 (24.3%)	340 (26.2%)	376 (27.6%)	994 (26.1%)	3.54	.17
Close Relationships	200 (17.5%)[a]	173 (13.3%)[b]	176 (12.9%)[b]	549 (14.4%)	12.40	.002
Peripheral Relationships	668 (58.3%)	787 (60.5%)	812 (59.5%)	2267 (59.5%)	1.28	.53
Total	1146	1300	1364	3810		

Note. Reported are absolute numbers. Percentages numbers in parentheses express the proportion of the interactions within the particular age group. Superscripts indicate significance of post-hoc tests. Groups with different superscripts are different from each other ($p < .05$). Note that the numbers reported here differ from numbers reported in Nikitin & Freund (2018), although both publications are based on data from the same project. This is the case because only $N = 673$ (of 744) participants reported social approach and social avoidance goals in very close, close, and peripheral social relationships and were the effective sample for the analyses in the present research (see also the Methods section).

Table 3

General Linear Model with Habitual Goals, Relationship Closeness, and Age Group

Source	*F*	Hypothesis *df*, Error *df*	*p*	η_p^2
Habitual Goals	7.29	1, 670	.01	.01
Relationship Closeness	283.58	2, 669	<.001	.46
Age Group	7.50	2, 670	.001	.02
Habitual Goals × Relationship Closeness	76.40	2, 669	<.001	.19
Habitual Goals × Age Group	0.55	2, 670	.58	.002
Relationship Closeness × Age Group	2.76	4, 1340	.03	.01
Habitual Goals x Relationship Closeness × Age Group	3.72	4, 1340	.01	.01

Table 4

Predictors of Daily Outcomes for Very Close Encounters (Compared to Other Encounters)

	Subjective Well-Being				Subjective Health				Satisfaction with Social Encounters			
Variable	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*
Intercept	**4.08**	.07	[3.93, 4.22]	<.001	**4.12**	.09	[3.94, 4.30]	<.001	**4.05**	.08	[3.89, 4.20]	<.001
Approach Goals in Very Close Relationships	**.13**	.06	[.02, .25]	.02	.12	.07	[-.01, .26]	.08	**.17**	.06	[.05, .30]	.01
Avoidance Goals in Very Close Relationships	-.09	.06	[-.20, .02]	.11	**-.13**	.07	[-.27, -.002]	.046	-.08	.06	[-.21, .04]	.18
Positive Encounters in Very Close Relationships	**.09**	.03	[.04, .15]	.002	.06	.04	[-.01, .13]	.11	**.14**	.04	[.06, .21]	<.001
Negative Encounters in Very Close Relationships	**-.13**	.04	[-.20, -.06]	.001	**-.18**	.05	[-.27, -.09]	<.001	-.08	.05	[-.18, .21]	.06
Age	**.01**	.003	[.001, .01]	.02	.00	.003	[-.01, .01]	.99	.00	.003	[-.01, .01]	.88
Approach Goals × Avoidance Goals	.02	.03	[-.03, .08]	.36	.01	.03	[-.06, .07]	.87	**.06**	.03	[.01, .12]	.03
Approach Goals × Positive Encounters	-.05	.04	[-.12, .04]	.30	-.03	.05	[-.12, .07]	.59	-.03	.05	[-.13, .12]	.56
Approach Goals × Negative Encounters	-.03	.05	[-.12, .06]	.54	.02	.06	[-.10, .14]	.74	.01	.06	[-.11, .13]	.87
Approach Goals × Age	.0001	.003	[-.01, .01]	.97	.003	.004	[-.004, .01]	.36	.001	.004	[-.01, .01]	.71
Avoidance Goals × Positive Encounters	**.08**	.04	[.01, .15]	.03	**.11**	.05	[.02, .20]	.02	.07	.05	[-.02, .16]	.15
Avoidance Goals × Negative Encounters	-.001	.05	[-.09, .09]	.98	-.03	.06	[-.14, .08]	.63	-.02	.06	[-.13, .10]	.79
Avoidance Goals × Age	.004	.003	[-.002, .01]	.22	.001	.003	[-.01, .01]	.73	.002	.003	[-.004, .01]	.50
Positive Encounters × Age	**.01**	.002	[.002, .01]	.01	**.005**	.002	[.0004, .01]	.03	.004	.002	[-.001, .01]	.11
Negative Encounters × Age	-.002	.002	[-.01, .01]	.29	-.003	.003	[-.01, .002]	.21	-.001	.003	[-.01, .005]	.76
Approach Goals × Avoidance Goals × Age	**.01**	.002	[.002, .01]	.004	**.01**	.002	[.002, .01]	.004	**.01**	.002	[.002, .01]	.004
Approach Goals × Positive Encounters × Age	.003	.002	[-.002, .01]	.18	.002	.003	[-.004, .01]	.60	.004	.003	[-.002, .01]	.20
Approach Goals × Negative Encounters × Age	.003	.003	[-.003, .01]	.38	.005	.004	[-.002, .01]	.17	.001	.004	[-.01, .01]	.78
Avoidance Goals × Positive Encounters × Age	-.004	.002	[-.01, -.00]	.05	-.004	.003	[-.01, .001]	.10	**-.01**	.003	[-.01, -.001]	.03
Avoidance Goals × Negative Encounters × Age	-.003	.003	[-.01, .002]	.24	-.004	.003	[-.01, .003]	.26	-.002	.003	[-.01, .005]	.55

Note. Positive encounters and negative encounters are entered as dummy variables with 1 = positive/negative encounter with very close persons, 0 = positive/negative encounter not with very close persons. Approach/Avoidance goals = approach/avoidance goals in very close relationships. Controlled for gender (male vs. female), partnership status (single, widowed, divorced vs. married or in stable partnership), and day (weekdays vs. weekend days) as well as approach and avoidance goals in close and peripheral relationships. CI = confidence interval. Significant results are presented in bold.

Table 5

Predictors of Daily Outcomes for Close Encounters (Compared to Other Encounters)

	Subjective Well-Being				Subjective Health				Satisfaction with Social Encounters			
Variable	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*
Intercept	**4.09**	.07	[3.94, 4.24]	<.001	**4.12**	.09	[3.94, 4.30]	<.001	**4.10**	.08	[3.90, 4.23]	<.001
Approach Goals in Close Relationships	-.04	.05	[-.13, .06]	.49	-.03	.06	[-.15, .09]	.61	.02	.06	[-.10, .14]	.69
Avoidance Goals in Close Relationships	-.02	.06	[-.14, .10]	.79	-.01	.07	[-.16, .14]	.90	-.002	.07	[-.14, .14]	.98
Positive Encounters in Close Relationships	.05	.03	[-.02, .11]	.18	.03	.04	[-.05, .12]	.41	**.15**	.04	[.06, .23]	.001
Negative Encounters in Close Relationships	-.07	.04	[-.15, .01]	.09	-.03	.05	[-.13, .07]	.55	-.02	.05	[-.12, .09]	.73
Age	**.01**	.003	[.004, .01]	<.001	.002	.003	[-.004, .01]	.51	.004	.003	[-.002, .01]	.16
Approach Goals × Avoidance Goals	.01	.02	[-.04, .06]	.49	.02	.03	[-.04, .07]	.56	.01	.03	[-.04, .06]	.38
Approach Goals × Positive Encounters	-.01	.04	[-.09, .06]	.72	-.09	.05	[-.18, .01]	.07	-.02	.05	[-.12, .08]	.70
Approach Goals × Negative Encounters	.004	.05	[-.09, .10]	.93	-.01	.06	[-.12, .10]	.89	.06	.06	[-.06, .17]	.92
Approach Goals × Age	-.003	.003	[-.01, .002]	.32	-.002	.003	[-.01, .004]	.60	-.001	.003	[-.01, .005]	.76
Avoidance Goals × Positive Encounters	-.02	.04	[-.10, .05]	.53	-.02	.05	[-.11, .08]	.73	-.01	.05	[-.11, .09]	.87
Avoidance Goals × Negative Encounters	.05	.05	[-.05, .14]	.34	.06	.06	[-.05, .18]	.29	-.05	.06	[-.17, .08]	.47
Avoidance Goals × Age	.005	.003	[-.001, .01]	.08	.005	.003	[-.003, .01]	.28	.001	.003	[-.01, .01]	.75
Positive Encounters × Age	-.003	.002	[-.01, .001]	.20	-.0002	.002	[-.01, .005]	.93	-.002	.003	[-.01, .002]	.26
Negative Encounters × Age	.002	.002	[-.003, .01]	.51	.004	.003	[-.002, .01]	.16	.001	.003	[-.005, .01]	.70
Approach Goals × Avoidance Goals × Age	.003	.002	[-.0003, .01]	.08	.003	.002	[-.001, .01]	.13	.003	.002	[-.001, .01]	.13
Approach Goals × Positive Encounters × Age	.00	.002	[-.004, .004]	.98	-.003	.003	[-.01, .003]	.31	-.003	.003	[-.01, .002]	.23
Approach Goals × Negative Encounters × Age	.001	.003	[-.004, .01]	.78	.0003	.003	[-.01, .01]	.93	.001	.003	[-.01, .01]	.85
Avoidance Goals × Positive Encounters × Age	.001	.002	[-.003, .01]	.58	.001	.003	[-.004, .01]	.61	.004	.003	[-.002, .01]	.21
Avoidance Goals × Negative Encounters × Age	-.002	.003	[-.01, .004]	.56	-.002	.003	[-.01, .005]	.59	-.004	.004	[-.01, .003]	.29

Note. Positive encounters and negative encounters are entered as dummy variables with 1 = positive/negative encounter with close persons, 0 = positive/negative encounter not with close persons. Approach/Avoidance goals = approach/avoidance goals in close relationships. Controlled for gender (male vs. female), partnership status (single, widowed, divorced vs. married or in stable partnership), and day (weekdays vs. weekend days) as well as approach and avoidance goals in very close and peripheral relationships. CI = confidence interval. Significant results are presented in bold.

Table 6

Predictors of Daily Outcomes for Peripheral Encounters (Compared to Other Encounters)

	Subjective Well-Being				Subjective Health				Satisfaction with Social Encounters			
Variable	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*	*b*	SE	95% CI	*p*
Intercept	**4.06**	.08	[3.91, 4.21]	<.001	**4.06**	.09	[3.87, 4.24]	<.001	**4.18**	.08	[4.02, 4.34]	<.001
Approach Goals in Peripheral Relationships	**.11**	.05	[.02, .20]	.02	.09	.06	[-.02, .21]	.12	.04	.05	[-.06, .15]	.39
Avoidance Goals in Peripheral Relationships	.04	.05	[.02, .20]	.53	.06	.07	[-.08, .19]	.39	.09	.06	[-.02, .21]	.12
Positive Encounters in Peripheral Relationships	**-.16**	.03	[-.23, -.10]	<.001	**-.10**	.04	[-.18, -.02]	.02	**-.31**	.05	[-.41, -.22]	<.001
Negative Encounters in Peripheral Relationships	**.14**	.03	[.08, .20]	<.001	**.15**	.04	[.07, .22]	<.001	.07	.04	[-.01, .15]	.08
Age	**.01**	.003	[.02, .02]	<.001	.01	.003	[-.001, .01]	.07	.005	.003	[-.001, .01]	.11
Approach Goals × Avoidance Goals	.001	.02	[-.03, .03]	.97	.001	.02	[-.04, .04]	.96	.01	.02	[-.02, .04]	.61
Approach Goals × Positive Encounters	**.08**	.04	[.01, .15]	.03	**.11**	.05	[.02, .20]	.02	.10	.05	[-.01, .20]	.07
Approach Goals × Negative Encounters	-.04	.03	[-.11, .02]	.22	-.03	.04	[-.11, .06]	.55	.01	.04	[-.07, .10]	.74
Approach Goals × Age	**-.02**	.003	[-.01, -.001]	.02	**-.001**	.003	[-.01, -.001]	.04	-.002	.003	[-.01, .004]	.59
Avoidance Goals × Positive Encounters	-.05	.04	[-.13, .02]	.18	-.03	.05	[-.12, .07]	.57	-.08	.05	[-.18, .03]	.14
Avoidance Goals × Negative Encounters	.01	.03	[-.06, .08]	.68	-.01	.04	[-.10, .07]	.80	-.03	.04	[-.12, .05]	.45
Avoidance Goals × Age	**.01**	.003	[.003, .01]	.004	**.01**	.004	[.002, .02]	.02	.002	.003	[-.005, .01]	.61
Positive Encounters × Age	-.002	.002	[-.01, .001]	.22	-.01	.003	[-.01, .00]	.05	-.0003	.003	[-.001, .01]	.91
Negative Encounters × Age	.001	.002	[-.002, .005]	.52	.0004	.002	[-.004, .01]	.87	.001	.002	[-.004, .01]	.74
Approach Goals × Avoidance Goals × Age	.0002	.001	[-.002, .002]	.82	-.0003	.001	[-.002, .002]	.82	.0004	.001	[-.001, .002]	.68
Approach Goals × Positive Encounters ×Age	-.003	.002	[-.01, .002]	.22	-.001	.003	[-.01, .01]	.76	-.01	.003	[-.01, .001]	.12
Approach Goals × Negative Encounters × Age	.0001	.002	[-.004, .004]	.94	.001	.003	[-.004, .01]	.66	-.003	.003	[-.01, .002]	.28
Avoidance Goals × Positive Encounters × Age	.002	.002	[-.002, .01]	.32	.001	.003	[-.005, .01]	.70	**.01**	.003	[.001, .01]	.03
Avoidance Goals × Negative Encounters × Age	.001	.002	[-.003, .005]	.56	.001	.003	[-.004, .01]	.62	**.01**	.003	[.0004, .01]	.03

Note. Positive encounters and negative encounters are entered as dummy variables with 1 = positive/negative encounter with peripheral social partners, 0 = positive/negative encounter not with peripheral social partners. Approach/avoidance goals = approach/avoidance goals in peripheral relationships. Controlled for gender (male vs. female), partnership status (single, widowed, divorced vs. married or in stable partnership), and day (weekdays vs. weekend days) as well as approach and avoidance goals in very close and close relationships. CI = confidence interval. Significant results are presented in bold.

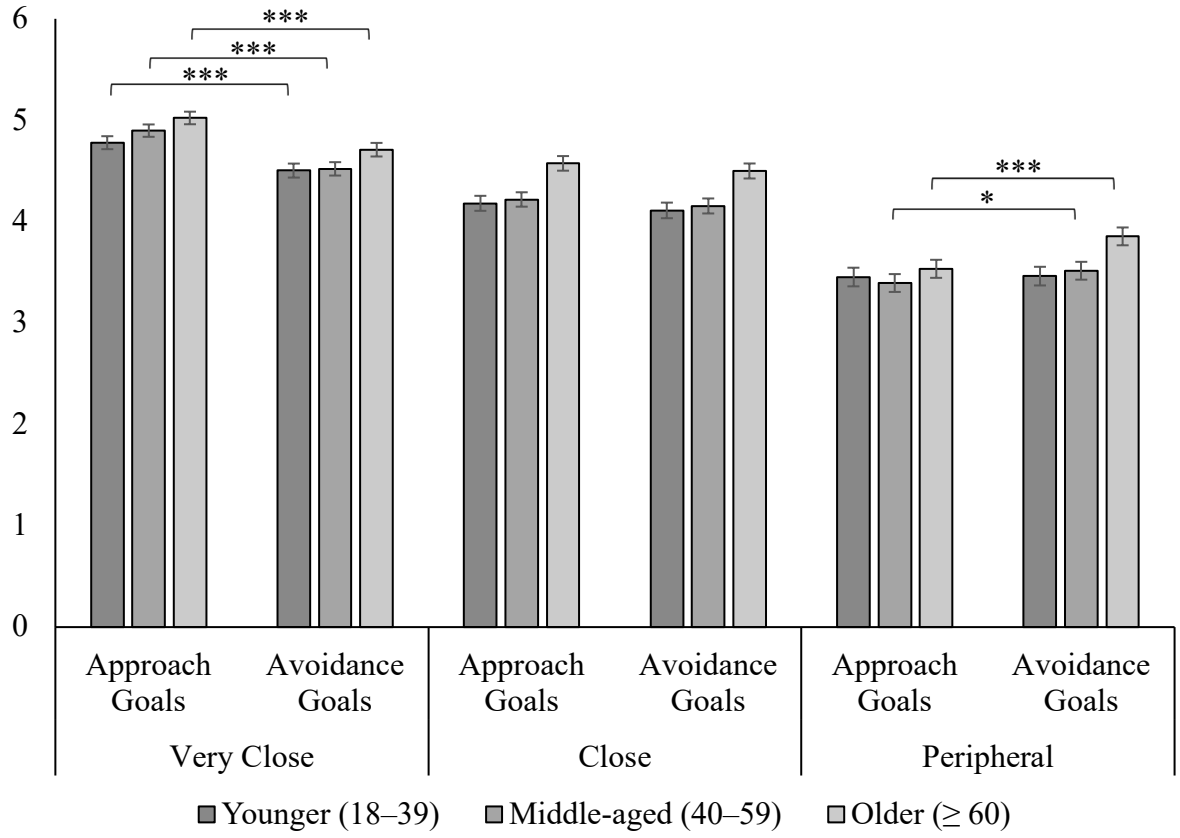

Figure 1. Approach and avoidance goals in different relationships (very close, close, peripheral) and different age groups (young, middle-aged, older). Error bars represent ±1 *SEM*.

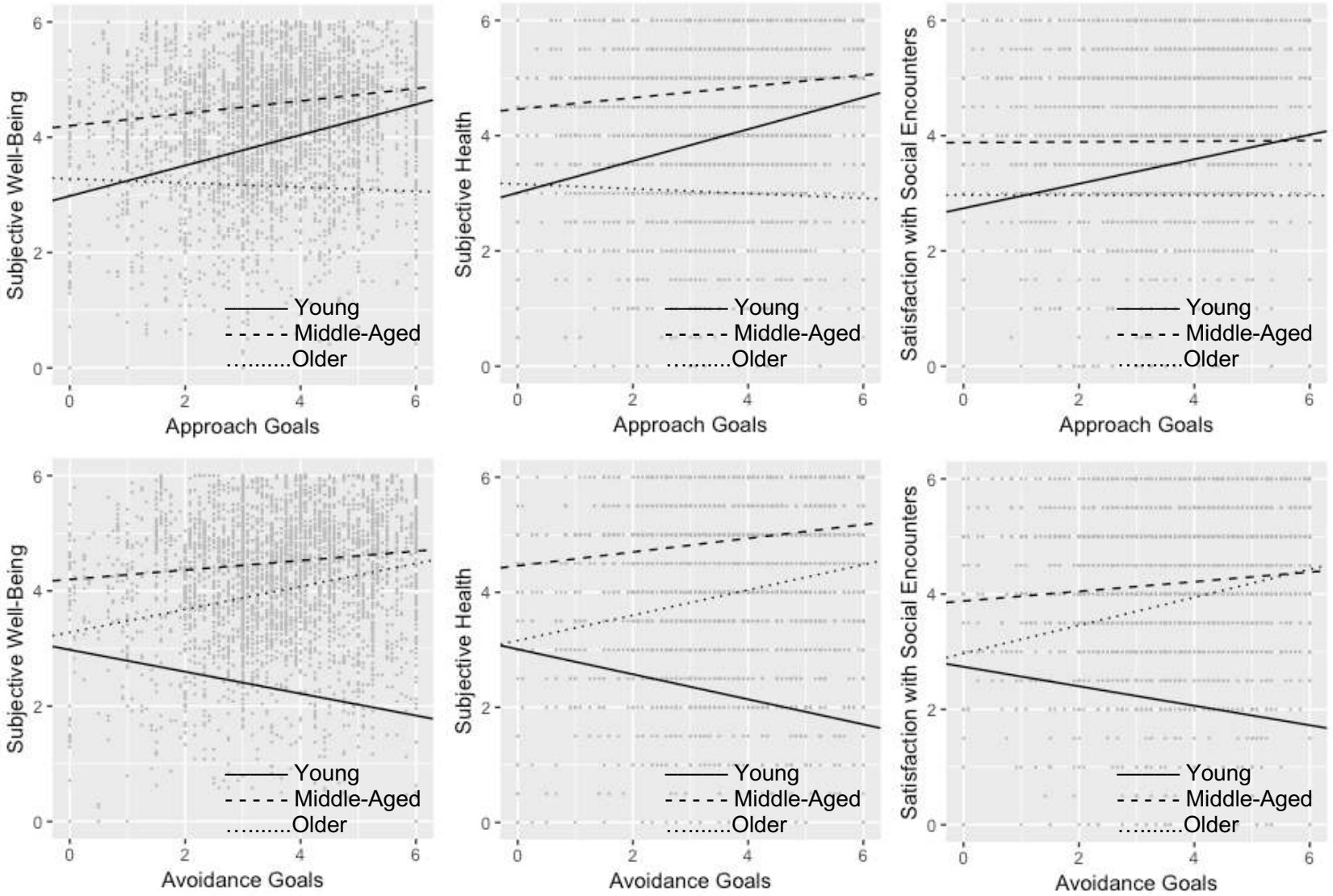

Figure 2. Approach and avoidance goals in peripheral relationships as predictors of daily outcomes. Lines represent predicted values controlled for approach and avoidance goals in very close and close relationships, positive and negatives social encounters in peripheral social encounters, and the control variables (gender, partnership status, and day).